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FORMER CITY EMPLOYEE INDICTED FOR LYING TO FEDERAL GRAND JURY IN CORRUPTION PROBE OF CITY'S HIRED TRUCK PROGRAM

CHICAGO – A former employee of the City of Chicago's defunct Hired Truck Program (HTP) was indicted today for allegedly lying to a federal grand jury in 2004 in connection with the federal investigation of corruption in the former city program. The defendant, **Valerie Jones**, was charged with one count of perjury in an indictment returned today by a federal grand jury, announced Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois. Jones worked in the HTP office from approximately July 2000 through January 2004 and most of that time served as the assistant to Angelo Torres, who was director of the program for a period prior to November 2003. Torres was sentenced to two years in prison in 2005 after pleading guilty to federal corruption charges.

Jones, 40, of Chicago, who was a city employee until earlier this year, will be arraigned at a later date in U.S. District Court in Chicago.

The HTP, which had a budget of approximately \$40 million annually, provided certain city departments such as Water Management, Transportation, and Streets and Sanitation, a means of

using privately-contracted trucking services on an as-needed basis to perform construction projects and operations.

According to the indictment, by April 2004, a federal grand jury was investigating whether Jones or Torres had financial relationships with any of the 170-some vendors who participated in the program, and whether Jones had any recent contacts with vendors in the program.

Jones testified before the grand jury on June 24, 2004, and among the questions and answers detailed in the indictment, she denied that she had any contact with HTP vendors since she had left the program office; that she never saw Torres with an envelope with money in it; she never saw any money being passed regarding the program with one exception; and she didn't recall any other occasions when cash was found in the office or was seen in the office coming from a vendor.

The indictment alleges, however, that Jones had regular contact with Trucking Company Owner B, both in person and over the phone, after she left the HTP office; that she had given Torres an envelope from Trucking Company Owner A, containing \$1,500 cash, in the summer of 2002; and in addition to that envelop, Jones had herself received cash and other goods from several trucking company owners, including Trucking Company Owner B, who had paid a portion of the down payment for a car for Jones.

"The grand jury is entitled to learn the truth from each witness, so it can determine whether crimes have been committed, and who has allegedly committed them. When individuals take an oath and testify before the grand jury, they must do so truthfully," Mr. Fitzgerald said.

Mr. Fitzgerald announced the charges together with Robert D. Grant, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, James Vanderberg, Special Agent-in-Charge of the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General; Thomas P. Brady,

Inspector-in-Charge of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service; and Alvin Patton, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division, all in Chicago.

Jones is the 49th defendant, including more than two dozen current or former city employees, who have been charged since January 2004 in the federal investigation of the HTP and a related probe of city hiring and promotion fraud. Forty-four defendants, including Torres, have been convicted, one is deceased, and the remainder are pending.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Barry Miller, Manish Shah and Julie Ruder.

If convicted, Jones faces a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. The Court, however, would determine the appropriate sentence to be imposed.

The public is reminded that an indictment contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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